

ANNUAL BOTANY REPORT FISCAL YEAR 1996

Prineville District
Bureau of Land Management

I. STAFFING

Ron Halvorson (NRS-PFT), Gail Smith (NTE Biotech)

II. MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A. INVENTORY

New inventory work took a low priority this year in preference to monitoring of existing populations. Required field work for the Criterion Land Exchange resulted in little monitoring being accomplished last FY. As a result, monitoring was emphasized in FY 1996 to the detriment of inventory. Some limited inventory was accomplished for *Astragalus peckii*, *Mimulus jungermannioides* and *Thelypodium eucosmum*. The most interesting was *Mimulus jungermannioides*. Pressed by Gail Smith to do some inventory by boat along the Deschutes River (she saw what she believed to be MIJU on a private river trip), Ron finally relented (tough duty, but someone had to do it), and they, under the able piloting of BLM's jetboat operator, inventoried sheer basalt cliffs and overhangs along the river. This resulted in several new populations (mostly on private land) including spectacular MIJU hanging gardens.

B. NEW POPULATIONS FOUND

Fifty new populations of special status or tracking species were found through project clearance work and limited inventory. Of these 49 populations, 26 are Bureau Sensitive plants, 5 are Assessment Species and 19 are Tracking Species. Three populations are on private land and one is on State land.

C. MONITORING

Some form of monitoring occurred on 62 populations of Bureau Sensitive plants and on 11 populations of Tracking Species, including: *Astragalus diaphanus* var. *diurnus*, *A. howellii* var. *howellii*, *A. peckii*, *A. tyghensis*, *Botrychium pumicola*, *Carex hysrticina*, *Castilleja chlorotica*, *Lomatium laevigatum*, *L. ochocense*, *Mimulus jungermannioides*, *M. washingtonensis* var. *washingtonensis*, *Silene scaposa* var. *scaposa*, *Talinum spinescens* and *Thelypodium eucosmum*.

Astragalus diaphanus var. *diurnus* was generally secure except for one location where livestock have milled about and trampled it pretty badly. This was a new impact and steps are being taken to try and keep this from happening again.

Astragalus peckii is generally secure, although severe OHV damage was noted in one population near Bend.

Botrychium pumicola (in the LaPine basin) seems to have had a poor year, with low numbers recorded.

There is no obvious reason for this. An interagency "BOPU Summit" will be held during FY 1997 to try and finalize a management plan for this taxon.

Castilleja chlorotica appears to have rebounded the year after a fire, but information from botanists on the Deschutes NF indicates that this effect will be short-lived. Another BLM population, adjacent to an old (>20 yrs) burn, had no plants in the burned area.

Effort was made to relocate most reported *Mimulus jungermannioides* populations to determine their true identity. Several of those along the Deschutes River were determined to be *M. floribundus*.

Monitoring occurred on 10 populations of *Silene scaposa* var. *scaposa*, a tracking species covered under a Habitat Management Plan. The plan called for monitoring of specific populations in 1995. This was accomplished this FY, and no changes were noted.

Some plants within one population of *Thelypodium eucosmum* were tagged to try and determine if this is a true biennial or if it exhibits perennial behavior.

D. CLEARANCES

A total of 39 projects were inventoried and reports written for the presence/absence of special status plants, encompassing 14,972 acres (actual inventory of many of these acres occurred in FY 1995, as part of the Criterion Land Exchange). Inventory for another 16 projects was waived. This also involved input/review of associated environmental assessments. Of those with field inventory, 14 resulted in botanical "finds" of one sort or another, requiring little or no modification to the project as proposed. One exception was *Thelypodium eucosmum* found near a spring, the development of which was critical for completion of a large riparian fencing project. Through on-the-ground coordination with the rancher, fence builder and range people, the existing fence will be modified to provide protection to this plant as well as associated *Mimulus washingtonensis*, while still providing necessary livestock water.

III. OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A. NATURAL AREA MANAGEMENT

The management plan was completed for the Horse Ridge ACEC/RNA, which also included a prescribed natural fire plan. Defensibility monitoring occurred in two ACEC/RNAs: Horse Ridge and The Island. Two miles of perimeter fence around the Horse Ridge ACEC/RNA were maintained.

The Island ACEC/RNA is proving to generate an increasing workload. A cooperative effort between BLM, Native Plant Society of Oregon and Oregon State Parks resulted in the pulling of thousands of medusahead (*Taeniatherum caput-medusae*) plants in early June. With over 500 recreational visits per year to this area, steps are being taken to control the amount of use. Finally, a natural ignition (fire) occurred, burning less than one acre.

B. CHALLENGE COST SHARE/COOPERATIVE EFFORTS

Two challenge cost share projects were funded: The sixth year of a long-term study of *Astragalus tyghensis* (ODA) and contribution to a multi-agency lupine seeding study with Mt. Hood NF.

Field assistance was given to the Phoenix Training Center in preparation for a riparian ecological site inventory class held in Prineville. Gail spent quite a bit of time identifying riparian species, not only for this class but for other district personnel.

BLM assisted the Crooked River National Grasslands and Oregon State Parks in the botanical inventory of a hiking trail in Cove Palisades State Park, designed to relieve pressure from The Island ACEC/RNA.

Monitoring was initiated on *Lomatium ochocense*, a newly described species from the Ochoco Mountains. Found and described by Richard Helliwell, of the Ochoco NF, the majority of the habitat is on adjacent BLM land. A challenge-cost-share project between the Ochoco NF and TNC resulted in establishment of long-term monitoring on the BLM populations. BLM assisted in additional inventory for this species this FY, and will assume monitoring responsibility for future years.

C. OTHER PROGRAM SUPPORT

Botanical input was provided for 48 grazing allotment evaluations/plans and the Millican OHV Plan. General oversight was provided for botanical inventory of the massive Northeastern Oregon Assembled Land Exchange. Steve Brunsfeld, a professional botanist from Univ. of Idaho, is conducting the botanical inventory on contract from the exchange proponent.

D. ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING/CONFERENCES

No training or conferences were attended in FY 1996.

E. OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

In spite of the overwhelming fire season, it does not appear that any significant botanical resources were fried. A small population of *Castilleja chlorotica* was burned in the conflagration near Bend, but that may have been it. There were some anxious moments when Fire Management proposed backburning through the Horse Ridge ACEC/RNA to stop the Skeleton Fire, but that didn't happen.